

Message Text

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61

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 PM-04 INT-05 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 CG-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /036 W

----- 015899

R 291930Z OCT 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1513

UNCLAS OTTAWA 4337

INFO ALL CONGENS IN CANADA (BY POUCH)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, CA

SUBJ: ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY TOLLS

REF: OTTAWA A-560, OCT. 27, 1976

1. FOLLOWING IS A PARTIAL TEXT OF INTERCHANGE BETWEEN FORMER PRIME MINISTER Diefenbaker (P.C.) AND TRANSPORT MINISTER LANG AT QUESTION TIME IN HOUSE OF COMMONS ON OCTOBER 27:

QUOTE. RIGHT HON. J.G. Diefenbaker: MR. SPEAKER, I WISH TO DIRECT A QUESTION TO THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT, IT HAS TO DO WITH THE THREAT MADE ABOUT A YEAR AGO BY THE MINISTER AND ALSO BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY AUTHORITY THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA COULD DETERMINE UNILATERALLY WHETHER TO INCREASE THE TOLLS ON PASSAGE THROUGH THE WELLAND CANAL. HAVING FOUND OUT NOW THAT THIS CANNOT BE DONE UNILATERALLY, ACCORDING TO THE LEGAL OPINION GIVEN BY THE LAW OFFICERS OF THE CROWN, COULD THE MINISTER NOW ASSURE THE HOUSE AND THE COUNTRY THAT THERE WILL BE NO INCREASE IN TOLLS, SUCH AN INCREASE HAVING BEEN CONDEMNED BY THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURE AND ALSO BY THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

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HON. OTTO E. LANG: IT IS CLEAR THAT ANY ACTION WOULD

FIRST REQUIRE CONSULTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES, SOMETHING WE WOULD HAVE WISHED IN ANY CASE AND WHICH WE ALWAYS INTENDED. SOME TIME WOULD THEREFORE ELAPSE BEFORE ANY ACTION FOLLOWED. IT IS A FACT, HOWEVER, THAT RECEIPTS FROM TOLLS NO LONGER COVER OPERATING AND MAINTENANCE COSTS. IT DOES SEEM IMPORTANT TO THE GOVERNMENT AS A MATTER OF POLICY THAT A HIGHER PROPORTION OF THE CHARGES INVOLVED, AND THE REAL COST OF OPERATING THE SEAWAY, BE BORNE BY THOSE MOVING GOODS THROUGH THE SEAWAY RATHER THAN BY THE TAXPAYER. THE FACT IS THAT A HIGHER PROPORTION OF BENEFIT FALLS UPON AMERICANS USING THE SEAWAY AND, THIS BEING SO, THE CANADIAN TAXPAYER IS IN EFFECT BEING ASKED BY THE RIGHT HON. GENTLEMAN TO CONTINUE SUBSIDIZING AMERICAN GOODS MOVING THROUGH THE SEAWAY. THIS CERTAINLY DOES NOT SEEM TO BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CANADIAN TAXPAYER. UNQUOTE.

2. THIS EXCHANGE BETWEEN DIEFENBAKER AND LANG BEARS OUT THE POINT MADE IN THE MONTREAL STAR ARTICLE TRANSMITTED WITH REPAIR.

3. FULL TEXT BEING POUCHED TO EB/TCA (BILLER), DOT (PIEPER), SLSDC (OBERLIN IN WASHINGTON AND KENNEDY IN MASSENA) AND EUR/CAN (BLAKEMORE). IT CONTAINS AN INTERESTING DISCUSSION OF WESTERN VIEWS ON TOLLS AND USER CHARGES VERSUS ALLEGED SUBSIDIZATION OF U.S. INTERESTS BY THE CANADIAN ST. LAWRENCE SYSTEM. DUEMLING

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, INTERNATIONAL WATERS, MARINE TRANSPORTATION, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS, TOLLS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA04337
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760405-0938
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976104/aaaaadfx.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 OTTAWA A-560
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ullricre
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 AUG 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 AUG 2004 by cookms>; APPROVED <15 SEP 2004 by ullricre>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY TOLLS
TAGS: EWWT, CA, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006